

Fathers-and-sons bond at picnic

Crockett Elementary Principal Juan Garcia said about 150 fathers and their sons showed up for the event. **A3**



Barktoberfest helps animal get adopted

The Harlingen Humane Society will host Barktoberfest Oct. 10. Proceeds from the event go directly toward the animals and the shelter. **A10**



Mexico extradicts drug lord, 'La Barbie' to the United States. **A8**

WEATHER FORECAST

TODAY
 HIGH 94
 LOW 69
 Mostly sunny

FRIDAY
 HIGH 92
 LOW 65
 Mostly sunny

Thursday

VALLEY MORNING STAR

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\$1.50 Sunday • 75c Daily

Shaping history
 with 28 feet of fiberglass



JASON HOEKEMA/VALLEY MORNING STAR

Cougar Marine employee Billy Torres soaks a sheet of fiberglass with an epoxy resin earlier this week in San Benito. The local marine construction group is working on creating custom glass-bottomed boats for Texas State University's Center for Water and the Environment in Austin, Texas. The boats will replace the ones currently in use on Spring Lake.

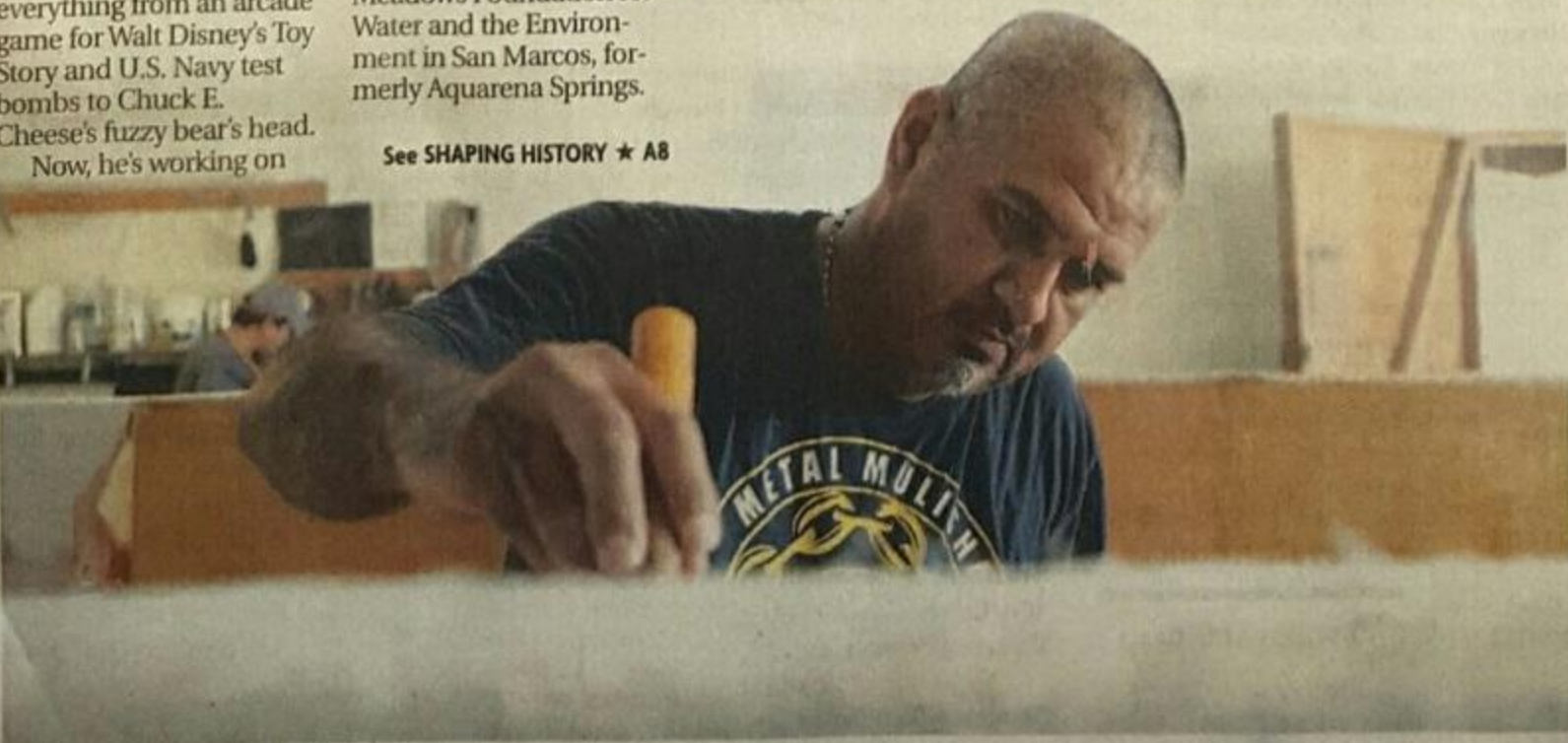
Local boat builder working on most challenging project

By FERNANDO DEL VALLE
 Staff Writer

SAN BENITO — Bill Gagan's a master when it comes to turning fiberglass into elaborate designs. In his 40 years in the business, he's designed everything from an arcade game for Walt Disney's Toy Story and U.S. Navy test bombs to Chuck E. Cheese's fuzzy bear's head. Now, he's working on

one of his most challenging projects — a 28-foot fiberglass mold that will become the cast used to build hulls for glass-bottom boats at a Texas tourist attraction. About seven months ago, Gagan and his company Cougar Marine began to build the mold for Texas State University's Meadows Foundation for Water and the Environment in San Marcos, formerly Aquarena Springs.

See SHAPING HISTORY ★ A8



Still wanted

City receives handful of applicants for city manager post

By EMMA PEREZ-TREVIÑO
 Staff Writer

HARLINGEN — The Harlingen city manager post already has drawn interest from four candidates. Others who want to throw their hats in the ring still have time. The last day to apply for the position is Oct. 15. The job was left vacant with the recent resignation of Carlos Yerena. Assistant City Manager Dan Serna is serving as interim city manager until the City Commission selects a permanent manager. At this point, the city has only provided the names of the applicants. Sean Carranco, who, a Star search suggests, is a business executive from the El Paso area. Darla A. Jones, who serves as assistant city manager in South Padre Island, also has applied for the position. Juan Cedillo, who appears to be from Pharr, and has served in various management posts in several Rio Grande Valley cities, also has applied.

See CITY MANAGER ★ A8

Are you ready for some fun? HinoPalooza is on tap tomorrow, Saturday

By KAYLEIGH SOMMER
 Staff Writer

HARLINGEN — HinoPalooza is coming. This weekend Hino Electric Power Company and Hinogas will host the second annual Texas State Championship BBQ Cook-Off and International Kids BBQ Cook-Off Championship. President and CEO of Hino Electric Power Company Alex Hinojosa, Jr said event goers can expect good food, great fun, music and team roping. Cash prizes will be awarded to those who compete and win for both cook-offs. A grand champion and a reserve champion also will be named in both competitions.

See FUN ★ A8

IF YOU GO

- ★ **What:** Texas State Championship BBQ Cook-Off and International Kids BBQ Cook-Off Championship.
- ★ **When:** Friday and Saturday
- ★ **Where:** Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show Fair Grounds, 1000 N. Texas Ave.

See IF YOU GO ★ A8

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Today's Page 1
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SHAPING HISTORY

FROM A1

Since he was 18, Gagan has built boats, including fiberglass drag boats.

But now he's creating a 4,000-pound mold that will be used to build hulls for long, tall sight-seeing boats that boast an antique flair.

"You can make anything out of fiberglass," Gagan said as he hovered over the massive mold in his shop.

"This is a very challenging shape to build a model on. It's got a lot of shapes difficult to mold."

After a national search, Gagan earned the job based on his work in fiberglass, said Deborah Lane, Assistant Director of Texas State University's Meadows Center for Water and the Environment in San Marcos.

"We decided Gagan would be the most qualified person for the job," Lane said.

"He had the most experience that seemed suited for the project."

The university, which bought the Aquarena Springs theme park in 1994, plans to use Gagan's mold to replace the hulls

of wooden glass-bottom boats that have toured Spring Lake for more than 50 years, Lane said.

The boat's wooden hulls, she said, rot in the water.

So Gagan's creating a mold that will make fiberglass hulls withstand decay, Lane said.

"It's a forever product," Gagan said of fiberglass. "It's not going to rot."

In March, Gagan and his seven-man crew began the project in his shop at Cougar Marine, known for building custom composite bay boats.

"People don't understand what it takes to do this — it takes months and thousands and thousands of man hours," Gagan said.

"You have to envision your finished product before you start. You can have all the plans in the world but if you don't see it in your mind you're not going to get it right."

First, Gagan and his crew worked from March to July to create the "plug," or the "exact duplicate" from which the mold is built.

"That plug's got to be as accurate as accurate

can be," Gagan said as his hands ran across the fiberglass mold.

"If you don't make that plug perfect, the boat won't be perfect. You've got to design it and engineer it."

During the first two weeks of August, Gagan built the fiberglass mold, engineering tolerance specifications within a 16th of an inch.

"We're picky," he said. "We're within a 16th of an inch everywhere. That's amazing."

Now, he's creating the plug he will use to build the boat's interior.

"They want it to look like the old antique boats," he said.

Next, Gagan will build a six-part mold to produce the boat's elaborate shape.

By the end of the month, he expects to complete the job.

"It's a labor of love," Gagan said. "I like developing and creating new stuff. Building all the custom stuff — that's what I really live for. Creative stuff — that's what's fun."